

# Cook Region Advocate

2005 • Vol. 1

## SOS Village gives hope to siblings and housing to foster families

Chicago is now home to the first foster care village in an urban setting. Mayor Daley and Alderman Latasha Thomas joined SOS Children's Villages Illinois in celebrating the opening of the Southside Village. The former site of an old mattress factory at 76th and Parnell will now be home to nearly 100 foster children and their caregivers. The standout feature is that these foster families will be living in 12 new single-family homes and four duplexes, which were built especially for the foster care program.



The foster family homes were funded through Chicago's Safe Homes For Kids and New Homes for Chicago programs, with a contribution of \$8 million. State monies from the Donation Tax Credits Fund and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund added \$1.75 million to the project. Two dozen homes for moderate-income families are also planned for the site.

The SOS foster care model is geared toward bringing sibling groups together under the same roof with a full time foster parent who doesn't work outside of the home that SOS provides. The SOS Chicago Village centerpiece will be a community center that includes day care for infants

and toddlers, out-patient therapy center, meeting rooms and administrative offices. The community center will be open to serve the greater Auburn-

Gresham community when it opens later this year.

"I am very proud that we been able to take an abandoned industrial site and turn it into a real asset to the community, one that offers hope and comfort to our children..." said Mayor Richard M. Daley.

This "village" model has European roots going back to 1949 when the first SOS Children's Village in Austria opened for children orphaned during World War II. SOS Children's Villages Illinois has operated the Lockport Village for 11 years in a community just outside Joliet. Each village is designed as its own neigh-

borhood of individual homes. Each household is headed by parents who are committed to raising five to seven children in a permanent setting until they reach adulthood.

The model rests on four principles:

1. SOS Village, the cluster of homes plus administrative and recreational facilities designed to support and interact with the larger community.
2. SOS Home, where each SOS family has its own house to provide a safe, permanent place to share meals, responsibilities and memories.

3. SOS Brothers and Sisters, who are likely to be part of larger sibling groups and who may have previously been placed separately.

4. SOS Parent, who lives with the children in the home and runs the household with the same cares, duties and joys as any other parent.

The SOS Parent lives year-round in a four- or five-bedroom house with approximately six children. SOS provides a household budget for utilities, phone, food, clothing, recreation and education, as well as benefits, an agency vehicle and a salary. The parents fulfill all the duties that come

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## SOS Village

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with raising youth with special needs to become whole, contributing adults.

Beyond the "typical" foster parenting, the Chicago village will also sponsor three additional programs. The Fostering Families program will allow the birth parent battling an addiction to live in a separate apartment connected with the foster family home. The SOS parent will be able to serve as a mentor and caregiver to the children, while the birth parent receives treatment and services to prepare them to regain parenting responsibilities. The Pregnant and Parenting Teens program provides four homes for youth currently under state care to reside at the village where they receive counseling, education and medical services throughout the pregnancy and after the birth. Because youth are part of the village until they reach adulthood, the Independent/Transitional Living program helps teens become self-reliant adults.

This residentially-based approach to foster care also exists in Generations of Hope in Rantoul and with Our Children's Homestead, headquartered in Naperville. The agencies are all overseen by DCFS and the caregivers are licensed according to DCFS policy to care for youth involved in DCFS. Yet, these types of programs have carved out a special niche to provide a house and a home.

## Cook North Foster Care Advisory Council changes format

The Cook North region will be initiating some changes with the regional Foster Parent Advisory Council and meetings that we hope will encourage more participation from our foster parents and make it easier for caregivers to have a voice in regional concerns. The council meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 1911 S. Indiana.

March 8th	10:30 to 12:00
April 12th	evening at the Bradley office - time to be arranged
May 10th	10:30 to 12:00
June 14th	10:30 to 12:00

The region also has established a new teleconference number that will allow foster parents the option to participate in our advisory council meetings via telephone. The phone number will remain the same for the next six months, at which time the region will evaluate the success of this initiative and whether we should continue with the call-in number. For those foster parents who wish to attend, meetings will still occur in-person at 1911 S. Indiana, however for those who have difficulty with childcare or transportation, phoning in may make participation easier. Contact either Sari Rowitz at (312)328-2484 or via e-mail at [srowitz@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:srowitz@idcfs.state.il.us) or Peggy Bosell at (847)745-3012 or via e-mail at [mbosell@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:mbosell@idcfs.state.il.us) in advance to get the number or to offer suggestions for future meetings.

### Training sessions to help transition teens to adulthood

Many staff and foster parents have questions regarding transitioning students into various programs and what opportunities and services are available to support youth who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as they progress to different grade levels and through graduation. Foster parents as educational advocates play a vital role in contributing to the transition process. The NIU Educational Access Project will be offering two trainings at Cook North sites on transitioning planning for youth and their educational needs. These trainings will occur on:

Tues., April 26th, 9:30 to 11:30  
2550 W. Bradley, Chicago

Wed., April 27th, 9:30 to 11:30  
8100 N. McCormick Blvd., Skokie

The training will cover the role of the caregiver, youth and caseworker in promoting the transitions and exploring different available options:

- IEP planning from 8th grade to high school
- Post-secondary education
- Vocational training
- Integrated employment
- Continuing and adult education
- Adult independent living services

For more information regarding these trainings, please contact Donnis Briscoe at (312) 328-2674 or via email at [DBriscoe@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:DBriscoe@idcfs.state.il.us) or Desiree Edwards at (312)328-2477 or via email at [DEdwards@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:DEdwards@idcfs.state.il.us).

# Cook South welcomes Michael Byrd as new Regional Administrator

Michael Byrd was no stranger in the Cook South Region when he served as Advisory Board Coordinator in the Office of External Affairs. Now, as the newly appointed (acting) regional administrator, he will be focused on all of the internal affairs that are part of running a region.

"My former position allowed me to network with so many people around so many important issues. A lot of what we face as a region are issues that I had already been working on, often sitting at the table with the Director," said Byrd.

As the Advisory Board Coordinator much of his efforts went toward being a conduit between the Director's office and the varied interests of caregivers, service providers and governmental bodies that were represented in the "alphabet soup" he monitored.

"CWAC, SWFCAC, AAAC, CIAC....in other words the Child Welfare Advisory Council (not to be confused with the Children and Family Services Council, Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, African-American Advisory Council,

Confidential Intermediary Advisory Council...I gained an understanding at a very core level about the reforms we will have to translate day-to-day practice in the region," he said.

Sitting at the table with so many advi-



Michael Byrd

sory groups helped Byrd see issues from many professional perspectives, but he never lost sight of the families and the children. Before he joined DCFS in 2002 he worked as the Director of Parent Education at the

Cook County Juvenile Court. Through that program he could help birth parents navigate the court system and meet the challenges in bringing stability to the children's lives. Later, that commitment to stability took on a different shape upon his arrival to DCFS. His first assignment was to support the Legacy Project, an effort to give caseworkers practical tools and training to help lead the longest waiting children to adoption. Through his hands-on approach, he came to see each child's unique circumstances and helped shape a plan for permanency. (Byrd even had a role in leading a child to adoption by the editor of this publication.)

Since stepping into the new position, one of Byrd's first actions was to meet with the Foster Parent Support Specialist team. He has made it a priority to leverage the resources of trainings, support groups and advisory councils so that foster parents can have necessary tools to work with the youth in their care.

Byrd works out of the office at 6201 S. Emerald. He can be reached at 773-371-6000.

## Cook Central focuses on preventing teen drug use

The Cook North Regional Advisory Council spent a morning learning and teaching caregivers how to recognize the impact of parent's drug use and how to prevent abuse by the youth now in their care.

Dr. Janet Chandler from the

DCFS Clinical Division conducted the training. She educated the group on the different types of drugs commonly used and their various effects. She also provided a list of clinics that have contracts with DCFS to provide drug-related services to youth in

foster care. She said that caregivers who contact these agencies could expect appointments within a week's time.

She also directed caregivers to the Office of National Drug Control Policy at [www.whitehousedrugpoli-](http://www.whitehousedrugpoli-)

[cy.gov](http://cy.gov). A copy of the directory was provided to the attendees. Those not at the meeting can request it from their caseworker or call, Adrienne Welenc, Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist at 773-292-7879. Dr. Chandler can be reached at 312-814-5980.

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

**Module 1** - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk (four 3-hour sessions = 12 hours)

**Module 2** - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs (three 3-hour sessions = 9 hours)

**Module 3** - Module 3 was combined with Module 4

**Module 4** - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (three 3-hour sessions = 9 hours)

**Module 5** - Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families (three 3-hour sessions = 9 hours)

**Module 6** - Working As A Professional Team Member (three 3-hour sessions = 9 hours)

**Module 7** - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identities (two 3-hour sessions = 6 hours)

**Module 8** - Promoting Permanency Outcomes (three 3-hour sessions = 9 hours)

**Module 9** - Managing the Fostering Experience (two 3-hour sessions = 6 hours)

**Module 10** - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families (five 3-hour sessions = 15 hours)

### COOK CENTRAL

#### Module

Volunteers of America 224 N. Des Plaines	May 7 & 14 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	1
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Association House SPANISH 1116 N. Kedzie	May 7 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	2
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	May 14 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	
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### COOK NORTH

City Colleges of Chicago 226 W. Jackson Blvd.	Jun 18 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	6
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	June 25 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	
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City Colleges of Chicago 226 W. Jackson Blvd.	May 4 & 9 (Wed, Mon) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	9
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City Colleges of Chicago 226 W. Jackson Blvd.	April 19, 21, 26, 28, May 3 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	10
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### COOK SOUTH

DCFS South Area Office 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago	April 14, 19, 21 & 26 (Tu, Thu) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	1
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Lutheran Social Services of Illinois 10 W. 35th St., Chicago	May 16, 18 & 23 (M, W, M) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	2
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Lutheran Social Services of Illinois 11740 S. Western Ave.	June 1, 6 & 8 (W, M, W) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	4
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FORUM 200 E. 75th St.	April 12 & 14 (Tues, Thurs) 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	7
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## Educational Advocacy

(Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend this training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy is offered following each FosterPRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

### COOK CENTRAL

Seguin Services 3100 S. Central Ave., Chicago	June 13 & 15 (Mon/Wed) 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
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Hephzibah Children's Assn. 946 North Blvd., Oak Park	June 25 (Sat.) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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### COOK NORTH

City Colleges of Chicago 226 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago	June 11 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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Irish American Heritage Center 4626 N. Knox, Chicago	May 21 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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### COOK SOUTH

DCFS South Area Office 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago	April 16 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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DCFS Harvey Area Office 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey	April 5 & 7 (Tues, Thurs) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
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	April 9 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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	April 11 & 13 (Mon, Wed) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
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Illinois Mentor 4749 Lincoln Mall Dr., Matteson	May 7 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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Lutheran Social Services of Illinois 10 W. 35th St.	April 4, 6 & 11 (Mon, Wed) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	8
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DCFS Harvey Office 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey	June 9, 14, 16, 21 & 23 (Tu, Thu) 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	10
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**All classes are coordinated by Harold**

**Washington College in Chicago.**

**Call 312-553-5821 or -3031 to register.**

**Regional V  
First Conference  
March 31- April 3, 2005  
"Building Bridges"  
Kalamazoo, Michigan**

Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association is joining Indiana,

Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin for a conference designed for adoptive, foster and kinship families.

Contact Gladys Boyd at 773-720-0669 or Regina Boyd at 708-568-6263. The conference brochure is available at [www.ofcaonline.org](http://www.ofcaonline.org).